

Message Text

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R 131725Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3771

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMCONSUL SURABAYA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 4632

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PT, PO

SUBJ: TIMOR DEVELOPMENTS

SUMMARY: INSURGENT UDT FORCES PRESENTED PORTUGUESE AUTHORITIES IN TIMOR WITH ULTIMATUM DEMANDING INDEPENDENCE AND ARREST OF FRETILIN LEADERS. EVACUATION OF PORTUGUESE DEPENDENTS BEGUN. CONTINUED DETERIORATION OF DECOLONIZATION PROGRAM IS WEAPON IN HANDS OF REGIME CRITICS. END SUMMARY.

1. UDT ULTIMATUM-UDT FORCES SURROUNDING PORTUGUESE MILITARY HEADQUARTERS IN DILI, TIMOR, PRESENTED THE PORTUGUESE AUTHORITIES WITH AN ULTIMATUM AT NOON, AUG. 12. IT CALLED FOR THE ARREST OF ALL FRETILIN LEADERS, IMMEDIATE INDEPENDENCE FOR TIMOR, AND TRANSFER OF POWER DIRECTLY TO UDT. EMBASSY SOURCES REPORTED THAT PORTUGUESE AUTHORITIES REPORTEDLY CALLED DEMANDS UNACCEPTABLE AND DID NOT COMPLY WITHIN THE THREE-HOUR PERIOD SET BY UDT. UDT REACTION IS UNKNOWN. OFFICIAL GOP COMMUNIQUE, WHICH STATED THAT THE SITUATION WAS CALM AND THAT PORTUGUESE MILITARY WERE PATROLLING THE STREET OF DILI, WERE LESS THAN ACCURATE. UDT FORCES CONTROLLED PSP HEADQUARTERS, THE RADIO STATION, THE AIRPORT, AND THE PORT IN DILI. THE EVACUATION OF 272 PORTUGUESE CITIZENS, MOSTLY MILITARY DEPENDENTS, TO DARWIN BY SHIP, ALSO INDICATES
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THAT PORTUGUESE NOT IN COMPLETE CONTROL. MAJ. SOARES OF PRESIDENT'S

STAFF TOLD AN AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT THE POLICE COMMANDER WAS BEING HELD HOSTAGE BY UDT, AND THAT PORTUGUESE MILITARY ARE CONFINED TO BARRACKS. SOARES ALSO SAID THAT CONTRARY TO LISBON PRESS REPORTS, UDT HAD NOT RESPONDED TO CALLS BY PORTUGUESE AUTHORITIES FOR NEGOTIATION. THERE WERE NO REPORTS OF FIREFIGHTS IN DILI.

2. GOP REACTION: ON AUGUST 11 COSTA GOMES PRESIDED AT A MEETING OF THE NATIONAL DECOLONIZATION COMMISSION, WHICH FOCUSED ON TIMOR AND ANGOLA. VITOR ALVES AND MELO ANTUNES ALSO PARTICIPATED AT PRESIDENT'S REQUEST. ON THE MORNING OF AUG. 13, MAJ. SOARES DEPARTED FOR TIMOR ON A WEEK-LONG FACT-FINDING MISSION. ONE OF THE REASONS FOR SOARES' TRIP COULD BE BAD STATE OF COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN TIMOR AND PORTUGAL.

3. COMMENT: PROBABLY DUE TO FAULTY COMMUNICATIONS, THE SITUATION IN TIMOR REMAINS UNCLEAR AND CONFUSED TO PORTUGUESE OBSERVERS. THE BEHAVIOR OF UDT, WHICH HAD BEEN CONSIDERED PRO-PORTUGUESE, IS THE PRIME MYSTERY. WHATEVER THE FINAL OUTCOME, PORTUGUESE DECOLONIZATION SCHEDULE, WHICH PLANNED FOR AN OCT. 1978 TIMOR INDEPENDENCE, WILL PROBABLY BE SCRAPPED OR DRASTICALLY MODIFIED IN LIGHT OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS. THERE MAY BE LITTLE PORTUGUESE CAN DO TO RETRIEVE SITUATION.

4. THE UNRAVELLING OF THE TIMOR DECOLONIZATION, AND THE WORSENING ANGOLAN CIVIL WAR ARE COMBING TO GIVE THE MUCH-TOUTED DECOLONIZATION PROGRAM A THREADBARD APPEARANCE. THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THIS IS NOT INCONSIDERABLE. DECOLONIZATION WAS AN OBJECTIVE PART OF THE MORAL BASIS OF THE 1974 COUP AND WAS SEEN BY SOME AS THE FOUNDATION FOR A THIRD-WORLD ORIENTED DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE. THE RECENT COLONIZATION FAILURES NOW APPARENTLY INCLUDING TIMOR, HAVE BECOME WEAPONS IN THE HANDS OF THE CRITICS OF THE PRESENT REGIME.

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